

8. (Amended) A method for etching a silicon wafer using XeF_2 , comprising steps of:

- (a) etching a silicon wafer using an etching apparatus comprising a loading chamber for loading XeF_2 , an expansion chamber for collecting sublimated XeF_2 from the said loading chamber, and an etching chamber for etching using XeF_2 supplied from the said expansion chamber; [and]
- (b) eliminating air moisture in each chamber to prevent formation of HF by injecting nitrogen to the loading chamber, the expansion chamber or the etching chamber, and exhausting the injected nitrogen therefrom prior to the said step (a); and
- (c) controlling the internal pressure of the loading chamber at a level between sublimation pressure of XeF_2 and atmospheric pressure to prevent sublimation of the residual XeF_2 in the loading chamber after the said step (a).

12. (Amended) A method for etching a silicon wafer using XeF_2 , which method comprises:

- (a) eliminating air moisture in a loading chamber, an expansion chamber, and an etching chamber to prevent formation of HF by injecting nitrogen to the loading chamber, the expansion chamber or the etching chamber and exhausting the injected nitrogen therefrom;
- (b) thereafter loading XeF_2 in said loading chamber;
- (c) collecting sublimated XeF_2 from said loading chamber in said expansion chamber; [and]
- (d) etching said silicon wafer in an etching chamber using XeF_2 supplied from said expansion chamber; and